

POWERFUL CONNECTIONS
Building Better Workforce Partnerships

Introduction

Powerful Connections is a project aimed toward developing and enhancing awareness, productive communications and ongoing relationships between the workforce production sector in East Central Indiana, with its significant capacity for aligning programs and services with private sector needs, and the regional business sector, with its ever-present need for more and better employees. This project recognizes that simple, episodic awareness activities by themselves are not enough to address the challenges of workforce development in the region. Any significant improvement must be rooted in ongoing communications and face-to-face connections and the relationships that all of this portends. Like both education and business itself, at their most basic levels, this project acknowledges the power of relationships that transcend the duration of the 14-month project period. These perspectives serve to delineate the basic difference between mere connections and powerful connections with significant potential for impact and change.

Need

For purposes of this initiative, and according to the WorkOne Central Indiana, there are approximately 400 businesses in the region, 4 area career centers and several high schools that offer Career and Technical Education programs. In addition, there are two IVY Tech Regional Centers and Ball State University within the purview of the Region 6 Works Council. The sum of this comprises the organizational universe for this initiative.

This project will include the following primary employment sectors and pathways. These sectors and pathways have been validated and verified in data analysis and corroborated in discussions with selected CTE teachers and administrators, workforce development administrators and community leaders.

<u>EMPLOYMENT SECTOR</u>	<u>ASSOCIATED PATHWAYS</u>
Advanced Manufacturing	Machine Tool Technology Machine Trades Engineering
Agriculture Business and Technology	
Automotive Technology	
Building Trades	Construction Technology Drafting Technology
Culinary Arts	
Education	Early Childhood Education
Facility Maintenance	
Information Technology	Network Fundamentals Graphic design

Interdisciplinary Cooperative Education	
Marketing	Sports and Entertainment
Medical/Health Services	Bio-Medical Sciences Certified Nursing Assistant Emergency Medical Services Dental Careers
Public Safety	Fire and Rescue
Radio/TV Broadcasting	
Veterinary Science	
Welding	

In a recent survey of businesses in Economic Growth Region 6 conducted by WorkOne Central Indiana (February 2014), it was discovered that only 20.4% had utilized the programs and services offered by regional CTE centers. This glaring disparity, which exists during a period when workforce needs have never been greater and more important, bespeaks a significant disconnect between regional companies and CTE operations. This same survey revealed that more than 50% of private sector respondents required a professional certification at the time of employment. Further, available anecdotal information indicates that information about CTE opportunities and programs is readily available. These dynamics suggest strongly that there is a major need for ongoing communications and relationships between and among CTE teachers, counselors and administrators and regional business leaders.

The gap that will be addressed with this project is not a gap in the mosaic of available CTE offerings in the region nor is it a gap associated directly with time, money or geography. It is a gap that is largely interpersonal in nature and exists between and among the teachers, counselors and leaders of CTE programs and services and the leaders of the region's businesses. And this gap presupposes two interrelated factors as follows.

1. Interpersonal relationships that derive from human interaction and mutual interests are far superior to one-way, episodic communication efforts toward actual behavioral change.
2. Human interaction over time is the only way that relationships can progress from general awareness to understanding to support to commitment.

Project Description, Performance Measures, Evaluation and Sustainability

This project focuses on creating awareness, understanding and collaboration between and among Career and Technical Education teachers, school counselors and leaders of regional businesses. Specifically, CTE teachers and counselors will spend one day each during summer 2014 and summer 2015 with business leaders at their location learning about specific workforce needs, sharing educational program and curriculum details and establishing effective relationships. Business leaders will spend a three-hour period at area career centers and selected high schools learning about related educational issues and opportunities. These exchanges will be supported and reinforced by meetings with business leaders at their locations by Business Service Representatives of WorkOne Central Indiana for the purpose of

promoting awareness of CTE programs and offerings and an immersive learning CTE marketing project conducted by undergraduate marketing students at Ball State University. This project will be managed by a part-time coordinator.

The outcomes of this project include the following

1. Increased awareness of CTE programs, offerings and opportunities by regional business leaders.
2. Increased awareness of workforce needs, challenges and opportunities by CTE teachers, school counselors and administrators.
3. Changes in perceptions of both regional businesses and CTE leaders about workforce needs and workforce development opportunities.

The project partners, their roles and their responsibilities are portrayed in the following table.

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>PARTNER</u>	<u>ROLE</u>	<u>RESPONSIBILITY</u>
CTE Centers/Providers	Area 18 CTE Cooperative, Muncie Area Career Center, Richmond Community Schools and New Castle Area Career Programs.	Liaison to Businesses/Employers	Participate in Day-Long Visits to Businesses/Employers; Host visits by Business Leaders
Postsecondary Providers	Ivy Tech	Liaison to Businesses/Providers	Participate in Visits to Businesses/Employers
Employers	Businesses/Employers Identified by the Strategic Growth Alliance	Liaison to CTE Providers	Participate in Visits to CTE Centers; Host Visits by CTE Leaders
Regional Workforce Development Agency	Strategic Growth Alliance	Project Marketing Support	Organize/Conduct Business Service Representative Marketing Visits to Businesses/Employers
University Support	Building Better Communities, Ball State University	Project Marketing Support and Project Coordination	Organize/Conduct Student Marketing Project; General Project Management and Support
Workforce Promotion	Region 6 Works Council	General Project Oversight	Receive Regular Briefings and Progress Updates

1. 100 CTE teachers, school counselors and selected administrators will be invited to visit businesses for one full day during both summer 2014 and summer 2015. Teachers and counselors will be provided with a stipend for each of these visitations.
2. Approximately 400 regional business leaders will be invited to visit regional CTE programs and meet with secondary education leaders to discuss strategic alignment, specific workforce needs and general curricular matters during the 2014-2015 school year.
3. WorkOne Central Indiana Business Service Representatives (BSR) will integrate a major CTE awareness strategy into individual business visit presentations to familiarize regional businesses with CTE programs and services, and how workforce development programs can support dual credit opportunities.
4. 10 undergraduate marketing students will comprise 1 immersive learning team to plan and conduct a career and technical education marketing program for implementation during the 2014-2015 school year. This program will emphasize educational programs and services and be focused primarily on business leaders.
5. This project will be managed by a part-time coordinator.

Project Timeline

The following general project timeline will be observed and managed.

Spring 2014	Project Planning, Hire Coordinator and Initiate Project Communications Collect Pre-Project Data
Summer 2014	CTE Teachers/Administrators Visit Businesses
Fall/Spring 2014-15	Business Leaders Visit CTE Programs BSRs Promote CTE Programs and Services Related Marketing Program Developed and Executed
Summer 2015	CTE teachers/Administrators Visit Businesses Collect Post-Project Data Project Evaluation and Report

Project Deliverables

The following pre-project and post-project data will be collected as the basis for various project deliverables.

- CTE Teachers'/Administrators' Awareness/Understanding of Business Workforce Needs, Existing Communication Linkages and the Nature of Their Relationships with Business Leaders.
- Business Leaders' Awareness/Understanding of CTE Programs and Services, Existing Communication Linkages and the Nature of Their Relationships with CTE Teachers/Administrators.
- Number and Nature of Contacts Between CTE Teachers/Administrators and Business Leaders.
- General Perceptions of Workforce Training/Education and the Roles of CTE Teachers/Administrators and Business Leaders.

The following deliverables will be prepared and disseminated.

1. Formal Evaluation Report of Project Activities and Outcomes (Formative and Summative)
2. Research Report Related to Project Outcomes and Activities (See above)
3. Research Report Related to Perceptions of CTE Teachers/Administrator and Business Leaders

The following outcomes-based measures will be used to determine the success of the project.

1. Pre-/Post-Test Differences in CTE Teacher/Administrator Understanding of Workforce Needs
2. Pre-/Post-Test Differences in Business Leaders Understanding of CTE Programs and Services
3. Increases/Decreases in the Contacts Between CTE Teachers/Administrators and Business Leaders
4. Changes in Perceptions of Workforce Training/Education and the Roles of CTE Teachers/Administrators and Business Leaders

Regarding plans for ensuring a substantive evaluation, there are three considerations involved as follows.

1. The Region 6 Works Council will serve as the oversight body for the project.
2. The data collection/analysis protocols and expectations of Building Better Communities at Ball State University will be observed.
3. The data/information needs of the regional Strategic Growth Alliance and other related bodies were carefully considered in the design of this initiative.

It is recognized that one year of concentrated intervention, while making considerable progress and impact, cannot fully change perceptions and behavior on a permanent basis. To do this would require ongoing activity to reinforce initial impacts and continue to establish mutually-reinforcing relationships between and among business leaders/employers and CTE teachers, counselors and administrators. The partners identified above understand this and have committed themselves to continue this effort beyond the grant period. While the project might be configured differently and involve others, the partners have a strong sense of faith in this approach, believe that the projects results will be auspicious and, therefore, will be resolute in pursuing the outcomes identified previously.